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ABSTRACT

Vocational guidance is a comprehensive, developmental program designed to meet the career development, vocational education, and employment needs of all ages in all communities. Federal legislation emphasizes vocational guidance and counseling programs as essential to the successful placement of individuals in careers. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 as amended in 1976 provides funding for vocational guidance programs; the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) provides policy direction, coordination, and leadership in this field. Vocational guidance contributes to meeting both individual and societal needs. As American jobs change, counselors can help people meet the challenge of change. In the future, vocational guidance must assume leadership to ensure that comprehensive guidance programs, services, and activities are an integral part of the vocational education program and take an aggressive role to develop and enhance existing relationships with the private sector. In line with these needs, OVAE is providing leadership through supportive research, coordination, and various kinds of technical assistance. (YLB)

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The Future Role of Vocational Guidance: A National Perspective

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THE FUTURE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Recently in Washington, a group of experts testified on Capitol Hill on "the transition to tomorrow's workplace." As the jobs Americans have change, there is interest at all levels and in all sectors on how people can best prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. We in education and training are particularly challenged to meet the skill development demands of the rapidly changing workplace. As President Reagan said when he was Governor of California, "What really counts is how education is serving our people, helping them achieve a better life; how it helps to produce the skilled men and women we will need to build a better society and a better life."

Career guidance professionals in education, business, and industry have a unique and essential role to play in the development of our human resources. Career guidance professionals can help students "achieve a better life" and "produce the skilled men and women" President Reagan spoke of.

Vocational guidance began as a service to help youth choose, prepare, enter, and advance in an occupation. Its focus was on occupational choice, job placement, and job adjustment. Today, however, vocational guidance is a comprehensive, developmental program designed to meet the career development, vocational education and employment needs of persons of all ages in all communities. It is a planned program that starts in early childhood and continues through the adult years and combines a full range of activities and services to provide individuals with the experiences and resources to help them grow and develop.

A well organized program of vocational guidance is built of linkages -- cooperative, working arrangements -- between educational systems and other relevant public and private organizations. It utilizes every resource and agency which can contribute to its effectiveness.

At the National level, legislation emphasizes vocational guidance and counseling programs as essential to the successful placement of individuals in careers. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 as amended in 1976, recognizes that a meaningful program of vocational guidance is of great importance to our Nation. The Act provides funding for this activity under Section 134 by requiring States to expend at least twenty percent of the total Subpart 3 allotment for guidance and counseling programs, services, and activities. Special emphasis is given to bringing individuals from business, industry, the professions, and other occupational pursuits into schools as counselors or advisors. Additional emphasis is given to bringing students and guidance counselors into these work establishments to acquaint students with the nature of work and to enable counselors to obtain experience. A greater knowledge of the demands of occupations and the world of work is urgent, especially in our rapidly changing, highly technological society.

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) views its role in implementing the vocational guidance and counseling provisions of the Act as providing policy direction, coordination, and leadership in this field. Because of our belief that guidance and counseling is crucial in the context of vocational education, OVAE assigned to the Division of Vocational Education Services the mission of providing national leadership and technical assistance to the States to

improve State and national initiatives in vocational guidance. As of December 1982, two staff members in the Programs and Services Branch have full-time responsibilities for vocational guidance and counseling.

Let us examine how vocational guidance contributes to meeting individual and societal needs. Through this program, individuals can identify their competencies; can develop new ones; can identify personal factors which are important in choosing occupations; can learn the realities of current and projected work opportunities; and can test out alternatives. Through a series of activities individuals learn to better understand themselves, to make better informed choices and decisions, to carry them out, to prepare to function in the changing job market, and to obtain employment. Vocational guidance considers the individual as a whole and contributes to his or her overall well being.

Vocational guidance can also assist society in meeting its needs. Equality of opportunity, high productivity, full employment, and economic revitalization are but some of these needs. Society is constantly changing, and vocational education can help individuals change with these changes.

We know that the jobs Americans have are changing. Old technologies are being modified, and completely new ones are being introduced. We know that Americans are working longer, and that more and more women are entering the workforce. We know that America has suffered declining productivity, and a deteriorating competitive position. We know that 80 percent of new jobs come from companies with 19 or less employees; that the rate of self-employment is increasing. All of these factors affect employment patterns, and consequently the

way we work and the ways we must be educated and trained for jobs. By being aware of these changing variables, counselors can help people meet the challenges of change so they will be productive and contributing members of society.

What do these factors tell us about the future role of vocational guidance? Essentially two things. First, vocational guidance must assume leadership to assure that comprehensive guidance programs, services, and activities are an integral part of the vocational education program. Second, vocational guidance must take an aggressive role to develop and enhance existing relationships with the private sector. We encourage this aggressive leadership role because in this field there is a need to:

establish a nation-wide program improvement emphasis

disseminate exemplary projects;

achieve better articulation among the education, business and industrial communities;

place added emphasis in helping individuals to retrain for careers with more secure employment;

improve the recruitment, training and staff development of counselors;

provide additional ways of helping special populations achieve their goals;

assure that guidance personnel keep up-to-date with changes;

establish increasing contacts between counselors and employers;

encourage data gathering and evaluation of programs;

and provide additional counseling services to adults searching for second careers.

In line with the above needs, OVAE is providing leadership through supportive research, coordination and various kinds of technical assistance. In the area of research, for some years this Office has sponsored projects with Vocational Education discretionary funds to facilitate a comprehensive range of improvements in guidance programs. The concept of community collaboration with a career guidance focus has led to a series of projects. The Community - Collaborative Career Guidance project is an example of concentrated efforts to combine State and local initiatives with public and private sector interests. About twenty communities volunteered to develop, implement and evaluate their own action plans for collaborative programs of career guidance. The recent completion and on-going dissemination of the Industry-Education-Labor Collaboration project focuses on practical methods for achieving industry-education-labor collaboration. It provides an action guide for collaborative councils to improve education services. The Guidance Team Training with Emphasis on Guidance for Vocations and Learners with Special Needs project stimulates the idea that comprehensive career guidance programs must be established to serve the career planning and development needs of all citizens.

With respect to coordination, OVAE has initiated a dialogue between several representatives of professional associations and public and private agencies. The purpose of this group is to identify major guidance issues and responsive strategies to jointly strengthen guidance, vocational education and other work-related education and training programs. This Office has also strongly supported a series of projects to upgrade counselor's skills. One is the "Improved Career Decision Making" (ICDM) project developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration to be used to train counselors in the use of career and

labor market information. The ultimate objective of this project is to enhance the match between worker skills and employer requirements. Another valuable resource is the Vocational Preparation and Occupations (VPO) handbook which links educational and occupational classification structures that are in current use. The VPO is useful in counseling since it will aid the student or job seeker in determining which programs to enroll in and which occupational skills to acquire to reach their immediate career goals.

As for technical assistance, OVAE provides it upon request. Within resource limitations, the view of this Administration is based on the premise that priorities originate at the local level, not at the Federal level. Local administrators know what the new demands are and respond to them.

In summary, we view the future role of vocational guidance as crucial in the context of vocational education. Vocational guidance not only responds to individual needs but also to societal needs. It prepares individuals to use resources wisely and effectively to enable them to make better informed choices and decisions about the jobs of today and tommorrow. In turn, it assists society to meet its demands by encouraging human development and by strengthening education and work. Vocational guidance as a comprehensive, developmental program will meet the challenges of the future.

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